

# Local & business

## KOKUA LINE

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## Council committee considers bus fare hike

*But it doesn't send the proposal to the full Council, seeking more scrutiny of the plan*

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Riding TheBus and TheHandi-Van may get more expensive starting later this year.

The City Council Budget Committee on Wednesday adopted a proposal by Chairwoman Ann Kobayashi that would increase the single-ride bus fare to \$3 from \$2.75, the one-day pass fare to \$6 from \$5.50, monthly passes to \$80 from \$70, and annual passes

to \$880 from \$770.

The Kobayashi proposal would also increase monthly senior passes, for those 65 and older with a valid senior citizen ID card, to \$8 from \$6 and annual passes to \$45 from \$35. The single-ride and one-day pass fares would remain at \$1 and \$2, respectively.

The cost to ride TheHandi-Van would increase to \$2.25 per one-way trip, up from \$2. To offset the impact on para-transit riders by encouraging them to ride TheBus, those with a para-transit eligibility ID card would pay \$10 for an annual TheBus pass, a drop from \$35 annually.

Youth bus fares would remain the same.

Kobayashi said it's her top pri-

### LATEST FARE INCREASE PROPOSAL:

- >> **Adult bus fare:** Single cash fare increases to \$3 (from \$2.75); one-day pass fare increases to \$6 (from \$5.50); monthly pass fare increases to \$80 (from \$70); and the annual pass fare increases to \$880 (from \$770).
- >> **Senior fare:** Monthly pass fare increases to \$8 (from \$6) and the annual to \$45 (from \$35). Other fares stay the same.
- >> **Youth fare:** No change.
- >> **Person with Paratransit Eligibility ID:** Monthly pass fare decreases to \$10 (from \$35); the annual pass fare is eliminated. Other fares stay the same.
- >> **TheHandi-Van:** \$2.25 per ride (from \$2)

Source: Honolulu City Council

ority to keep fares as reasonable as possible for seniors "who do not get this kind of increase in their Social Security payments."

City officials can look elsewhere to cut the budget, she said.

While adopting Kobayashi's version of Bill 77 (2018), the Bud-

get Committee voted not to forward the proposal to the full Council where it would face the second of three required votes. Instead, Budget Chairman Joey Manahan said he wants more time for himself, colleagues, Mayor Kirk Caldwell's administration and the public to digest the proposal and look at ways of establishing a program to assist riders with "extremely low income."

Caldwell and the Department of Transportation Services has been urging the Council to adopt higher transit fares, pointing out that they have not kept up with operational costs.

The original version of Bill 77

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## FARE

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(2018) came from former Council Chairman Ernie Martin, whose term ended Jan. 2. Kobayashi kept Martin's adult fare plan, but reduced the proposed increase on seniors that called for a \$12 monthly pass and a \$120 annual pass.

Bill 77 (2018) was introduced by Martin in October after Mayor Kirk Caldwell's original proposal to increase transit fares, Bill 66

(2018) was shot down by the Council 5-3 at its first hearing in September.

The Caldwell version drew heavy criticism from the public, particularly for proposing to increase annual passes for seniors and people with disabilities to \$110 annually from \$35, a 214 percent increase, and the monthly bus passes for seniors and those with disabilities to \$10 from \$6, an increase of 67 percent. That plan also called for the TheHandi-Van's single-ride fare to increase to \$2.50 from \$2.

While bus fares increased on Jan. 1, 2018, para-transit

fares last were hiked in 2001 when they rose to \$2 from \$1.50 a ride.

On Thursday, Transportation Services Director Wes Frysztacki said the administration supports the concept of Kobayashi's plan but asked that the increases take effect July 1 to allow his agency, which operates the Oahu Transit Services, and riders time to prepare for the changes.

Kobayashi's original proposal called for expanding the eligibility for those using TheHandi-Van to include those who can declare that they are receiv-

ing supplemental security income, or SSI. But that language was left out after Frysztacki told Council members that the Americans with Disabilities Act requires "eligibility to be based solely on a person's ability to use public transit, regardless of their income level."

Budget Committee members also received strong testimony from advocates for seniors and those with disabilities to be cautious when considering fare increases for Oahu's most financially vulnerable residents.

Wahiawa bus rider David Bohn said he doesn't see why annual senior passes need to increase when they already went up to \$35 from \$30 only a year ago. "Anything beyond \$35 is kind of expensive for some seniors, especially when they're on a fixed income," he said.

Donald Sakamoto, president of Citizens for a Fair Americans With Disabilities Act Ride, said his group supports a 25-cent increase in TheHandi-Van rate. It had earlier opposed Caldwell's 50-cent increase. "It should be a gradual increase," he said.



**Anything beyond \$35 is kind of expensive for some seniors, especially when they're on a fixed income."**

David Bohn  
Bus rider from Wahiawa